

REMARKS

Claim Rejections – 35USC § 102

Reconsideration is respectfully requested for Claims 1, 3-5, 8-10, 12, 15, 16, 19, and 20, said claims having been rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,678,209 to Guice. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Applicant's die inserts and slips are used to grip pipe for such operations as, but not limited to, drilling, running and tripping tubulars, making up and breaking out tubulars, and handling tubulars around the rig area. Die inserts are used because they are less expensive to change out and a particular set of slips can be used for various size tubulars by just changing the die inserts. Traditionally die inserts had a smooth back face which contacted the smooth face of the slip. These die inserts were bolted to the slips or were inserted in a groove or otherwise confined or attached to the slip or die inserts. The Applicant has discovered that, by adding some type of texture to the back face of the die insert, the die insert will transfer load more uniformly across the surface of the die insert contacting the slip. In turn, the load on the slips is distributed more evenly; thus, substantially lowering the possibility that any parts of the die inserts, slips, or pipe handling equipment will fail due to entire loads being supported at just a few points.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Guice reference is non-analogous art. The applicant claims a die insert for slips in a pipe handling apparatus. The Guice reference does not even disclose or suggest using die inserts. The die inserts in the current application are used to grip the pipe, whereas the slips in the Guice reference are used to grip the pipe. The purpose of using these die inserts is to make sure that the pipe is gripped in such a way that no portion of the slip contacts the pipe before another portion of the slip. Another purpose of the die insert is to be replaceable in case some of the teeth break off. For example, if the teeth, 32, in the Guice '209 patent are broken off, the entire slip has to be replaced. By using a plurality of die inserts, a die

insert can be damaged and replaced by another die insert for much less time and expense. For this technology to work properly, the die inserts must all contact the pipe at the same time. In sharp contrast from the present application, the Guice reference discloses a slip without the use of die inserts. Instead, the Guice reference discloses a slip in which one face of the slip is vertical, to ensure that most or all of the teeth are in contact with the tubular (see Guice, Column 4, Lines 19-21), and the other face of the slip is tapered to slide down the tapered slip bowl while the vertical face continues its vertical orientation (see FIG. 5). The face gripping the pipe will generally remain vertical to grip all portions of the pipe at the same time. Because the back face of the slip must be tapered, it cannot be parallel to the front face of the slip.

Additionally, the Examiner argues that the faces of Guice ('209) are generally parallel as evidenced by the illustration in Fig. 2. With all due respect, the Examiner erroneously interpreted Fig. 2 of the Guice reference. Although the faces appear to be parallel in the view of Fig. 2, it cannot be determined from that top view whether the faces are parallel (meaning extending in the same direction and never converging or diverging). Only the edges of the faces can be seen in Fig. 2 and therefore it cannot be determined whether they are parallel. If fact, they are not parallel. This can be seen in Figs. 3, 4 and 5 of the Guice reference. These figures show the length of the front and back faces and show that the faces are, in fact, not parallel (extending in the same direction and never converging or diverging). Included as Exhibit A are blown up versions of Guice's FIG. 3 and FIG. 4. We have extended the faces in both FIG. 3 and FIG. 4 (see Exhibit A, 100, 101, 102, 103, and 104) so the Examiner can clearly see that the lines converge. Since the lines extended from the faces converge, the faces are not parallel.

Additionally, the invention, as disclosed in the Guice reference, would not function properly if the faces were parallel because, as can be seen in FIG. 1 of the Guice reference, the slip 20 must grip the pipe in a "face-to-face engaging relationship." Guice, Column 4, lines 19-21.

In order to accomplish the slip engaging the pipe face-to-face and also sliding up and down the tapered bowl (FIG. 1), the faces cannot be parallel (See FIG. 5).

In sharp contrast, each and every claim of the current application requires that the front and back faces of the die inserts be **parallel**. Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 1, 3-5, 8-10, 12, 15, and 16 are patentable over the cited Guice reference and that the rejection should be withdrawn.

Claim Rejections-35 USC § 103

Reconsideration is respectfully requested for Claims 2, 6, 7, 13, and 14, said claims having been rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,678,209 to Guice in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,971,086 to Bee et al. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection. The reference to Bee et al does not add anything to the Guice reference to support a rejection. Bee simply discloses adding a coating to the teeth 11, which are on the front face of the slip. There is nothing in the Bee reference which discloses roughing the back face of the die. Claims 2, 6, 7, 13, and 14 are thereby submitted to be patentable for the reasons set forth above.

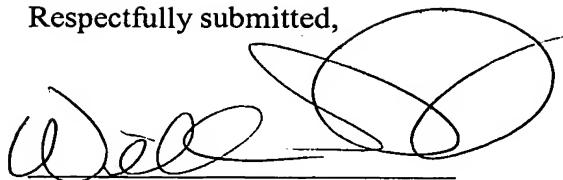
Conclusion

For the reasons set forth above, Applicant respectfully submits that Claims 1-10, 12-16, 19 and 20 now stand in formal condition for allowance and should be advanced to issue. The Examiner is invited to contact by telephone William E. Johnson, Jr., attorney of record for Applicant, at 713-355-4200, if the Examiner is of the opinion that such a telephone call would serve to expedite these proceedings. Although Applicant believes that no additional fees are required, the Commissioner is hereby respectfully authorized to deduct such fees, as might be required, from Deposit Account Number 13-2166.

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Date

Respectfully submitted,



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